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City of Johannesburg

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Media Release

For Immediate Release

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Lilian Ngoyi street Rehabilitation Project reaches over 75% completion ahead of October reopening

The Executive Mayor of the City of Johannesburg, Cllr Dada Morero, accompanied by the City Manager, Dr Floyd Brink; Johannesburg Roads Agency (JRA) CEO, Mr Zweli Nyathi; and members of JRA's executive management, led a tour of the 1.8-kilometer corridor on Wednesday, 9 September 2026, to assess progress on Phase Two of the Lilian Ngoyi Street Rehabilitation Project.

The project, which aligns with the City's Inner-City Masterplan, has passed the **75% completion mark** and remains on track to reopen on 31 October 2026.

The underground infrastructure required extensive reconstruction following a major gas explosion in July 2023.

Mayor Morero reiterated that the World Class tunnel infrastructure had to be rebuilt after the gas explosion, with an investment of approximately R40 million to restore essential services such as water and electricity networks. The City also installed additional infrastructure to support its future growth.

The catastrophic explosion on Lilian Ngoyi Street left a lasting impact on Johannesburg's infrastructure and urban safety protocols. Beyond disrupting daily life, the incident underscored the critical need for enhanced monitoring and preventive measures in high-risk urban environments. In response, the City took the decision to fully refurbish the service tunnel beneath this busy thoroughfare to strengthen long-term safety and prevent a recurrence of such a devastating event.

As part of the refurbishment, the design engineers proposed an advanced, real-time monitoring system interconnected with specialised sensing devices. Gas and smoke detectors monitor the tunnel for dangerous gas accumulation and potential fire hazards, while communication gateways (SEL 3505) relay alerts through City Power's fibre network to the City Power Infrastructure Support Services control room. This enables immediate intervention and the timely shutdown of

affected systems to help prevent further damage or casualties. The system is further secured through locked gates and infrared motion detectors positioned at both ends of the tunnel.

The total budget for the project stands at R192 million, supported by a 20% contingency fund set aside for unforeseen technical challenges.

“We want to emphasise that this is not a normal road; it is a transport precinct. Following the 2023 gas explosion, we had to rebuild critical underground infrastructure, including water and electricity networks, while also installing additional services to support the city's future growth. Engineers had to excavate up to five metres deep to rebuild the foundation and accommodate this infrastructure, which is why this project is far more complex than a standard road upgrade. By 31 October, we are not only reopening Lilian Ngoyi Street — we are restoring a safer, stronger and more resilient corridor for Johannesburg.”

Phase two covers the 1.8-kilometer stretch between Ntemi Piliso and End streets. The scope of work includes resurfacing, stormwater management upgrades, new sidewalks, kerbing, intersection base corrections; and public street lighting. This final phase will integrate the section with the 450-metre stretch between Harrison and Wanderers streets (Phase One), which reopened in September 2025.

Project managers reported ongoing site challenges, particularly the frequent discovery of existing underground services requiring relocation or repair. Engineers are also addressing localised sinkholes caused by underground infrastructure collapse and erosion, requiring delicate, time-intensive investigations.

Despite these complexities, the city officials noted that the cost per kilometer for the Lilian Ngoyi Street rehabilitation remains lower than average gravel-to-tar conversion projects of similar width, considering the deep structural excavations, utility tunnel construction, and sewer network upgrades.

JRA CEO Zweli Nyathi said major works are expected to be completed ahead of the October rains, after which bus stops, street furniture and landscaping will be finalised. “The JRA assures road users, residents, businesses and other stakeholders that every effort is being made to keep the project on track and avoid further delays beyond October 2026,” said Nyathi.

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Issued by the City of Johannesburg

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